

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 7266

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-4
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, CSCE, UR, US
SUBJECT: SHCHARANSKIY CASE

REF: MOSCOW 6025

SUMMARY: AN "ESPIONAGE" SCENARIO IS DEVELOPING SINCE THE MARCH 16 ARREST OF ANATOLIY SHCHARANSKIY WHICH INVOLVES EMBOFF PRESEL, THE SOVIET HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT, SOVIET JEWRY AND THE WESTERN PRESS, SAY VALENTIN TURCHIN. TURCHIN TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE NOW THINKS THE AUTHORITIES INTEND TO MAKE A STRONG ESPIONAGE CASE AGAINST SHCHARANSKIY ON THE BASIS OF INFORMATION WHICH HE ALLEGEDLY PROVIDED PRESEL AND ROBERT TOTH OF THE LOS ANGELES TIMES. TURCHIN BELIEVES THE CHARGES AGAINST SHCHARANSKIY WILL BE USED TO DISCREDIT THE DISSIDENT MOVEMENT AND TO HINDER THE CONTACTS THE EMBASSY AND OTHER FOREIGNERS HAVE WITH SOVIET ACTIVISTS. END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING TO TURCHIN, SOME TIME AGO SHCHARANSKIY COMPILED A LIST OF REFUSENIKS WHOSE EXIT VISAS WERE DENIED ON GROUNDS THEY HAD DONE CLASSIFIED WORK IN SOVIET INSTITUTIONS. SHCHARANSKIY THEN TOOK THE LIST OF INSTITUTIONS WHERE THESE REFUSENIKS HAD PREVIOUSLY WORKED AND COMPARED IT WITH A LIST OF INSTITUTIONS WHICH HAVE RECENTLY RECEIVED TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED EQUIPMENT FROM THE WEST. HE FOUND A HIGH CORRELATION AND CONCLUDED THAT MANY SOVIET
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INSTITUTIONS ARE MIS-USING WESTERN TECHNOLOGY FOR SECRET RESEARCH NOT CONNECTED WITH THE STATED OBJECT FOR WHICH THE EQUIPMENT HAD BEEN BOUTHS. IN OTHER WORDS, FOREIGN EXPORT LICENSES ARE BEING VIOLATED AND WOULD-BE EMIGRANTS DENIED EXIT VISAS ON THE BASIS OF THE SECRECY SURROUNDING THESE SOVIET VIOLATIONS.

2. SHCHARANSKIY DID NOT USE ANY SECRET INFORMATION TO ARRIVE AT

HIS CONCLUSION, WHICH TURCHIN DESCRIBED AS THE PRODUCT OF "PURE LOGIC" AND A "BRILLIANT IDEA." NONETHELESS, HE FEELS THAT SHCHARANSKIY WILL BE ACCUSED OF ESPIONAGE BECAUSE HE PROVIDED HIS CONCLUSIONS TO WESTERNERS.

3. THE CASE AGAINST SHCHARANSKIY, TURCHIN FEELS, WILL INCLUDE CHARGES OF "ILLCIT" CONTACTS WITH PRESEL. HE ALSO HAD FREQUENT CONTACT WITH ROBERT TOTH OF THE LOS ANGELES TIMES FOR WHEN HE BEGAN TO DEVELOP THE INFORMATION ABOUT MISUSES OF WESTERN TECHNOLOGY. TOTH SUBSEQUENTLY WROTE AN L.A. TIMES STORY ON THIS SUBJECT, SOME MONTHS AGO. EMBASSY DOES NOT HAVE EXACT DATE. PRESEL, IN FACT, DID NOT RECEIVE ANY OF THE INFORMATION PROVIDED TOTH.

4. IN THE COURSE OF SHCHARANSKIY'S TRIAL, AS TURCHIN SEES IT, THE AUTHORITIES WILL ATTEMPT TO DISCREDIT THE DISSIDENT MOVEMENT IN THE EYES OF THE SOVIET POPULATION AND ALSO ENCOURAGE ANTI-JEWISH PROPAGANDA. THEY WILL ALSO HOPE TO DISCOURAGE CONTACTS WITH RESIDENT WESTERNERS. THEY MAY GO SO FAR AS TO ACCUSE PRESEL AND TOTH OF HAVING CONSPIRED WITH SHCHARANSKIY TO COMMIT ESPIONAGE, AND THEY WILL MOST CERTAINLY ACCUSE THE EMBASSY AND THE WESTERN CORRESPONDENTS OF IMPROPER DEALINGS WITH SOVIET CITIZENS.

5. TURCHIN TOLD EMBOFF THAT THIS SCENARIO IS TIMED TO COINCIDE WITH THE OPENING OF BELGRADE AND WILL BE USED IN THE CSCE REVIEW CONFERENCE TO CHALLENGE THE LEGITIMACY OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN THE SOVIET UNION.

6. COMMENT: TURCHIN IS AN UNUSUALLY EXPERIENCED AND OBJECTIVE OBSERVER AND LEVEL-HEADED ANALYST OF THE SOVIET SCENE. HE IS NOT CONFIDENTIAL

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JEWISH AND NOT A MEMBER OF THE CSCE GROUP, THOUGH HE IS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH IT. WE FIND HIS SCENARIO PLAUSIBLE, ALBEIT HIGHLY SPECULATIVE AND THE EMBASSY HAS NO INFORMATION TO SUPPORT SHCHARANSKIY'S ALLEGED FINDINGS. ACCUSING SHCHARANSKIY OF ESPIONAGE WOULD ALLOW THE SOVIET SECURITY AUTHORITIES TO ATTACK SEVERAL DIFFERENT TARGETS AT THE SAME TIME. THE AUTHORITIES MAY HOPE THAT CHARGING SHCHARANSKIY WITH A CLEARLY CRIMINAL RATHER THAN A POLITICAL OFFENSE MAY REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF SYMPATHY THAT HIS CASE WILL GET IN WESTERN MEDIA.

7. AN ATTACH ON TOTH (WHO IS ABOUT TO LEAVE IN ANY CASE) WILL ALLOW THE SOVIETS TO QUESTION PUBLICLY, IN BELGRADE, THE WISDOM OF HAVING IMPROVED WORKING CONDITIONS FOR JOURNALISTS IF THE LATTER ARE ONLY GOING TO "PERVERT" THEIR NEW OPPORTUNITIES, AND ENGAGE IN UNJOURNALISTIC ACTIVITY. AN ATTACK AGAINST PRESEL, ALREADY TWICE ACCUSED IN THE SOVIET MEDIA OF BEING A SPY, IS BOTH EASY AND SERVES AS A WARNING TO SOVIET CITIZENS NOT TO SEE AMERICAN DIPLOMATS. IT ALSO PROVIDES THE BASIS FOR THE CASE AGAINST SHCHARANSKIY. IT IS A CHARGE THAT IS ALL THE EASIER TO MAKE, SINCE

SHCHARANSKIY WAS KNOWN IN THE REFUSENIK COMMUNITY AS A CLOST PERSONAL FRIEND OF PRESEL'S. IN THEIR EYES SHCHARANSKIY HIMSELF PROBABLY REPRESENTS A PARTICULAR DANGER TO THE SOVIET AUTHORITIES BECAUSE HE HAS BEEN PROMINENT BOTH AS A REFUSENIK ACTIVIST AND AS A CHARTER MEMBER OF THE CSCE OBSERVATION GROUP. HE IS ONE OF THE RARE REFUSENIKS WHO ALSO WAS A HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST. ATTACKING SHCHARANSKIY HELPS THE AUTHORITIES TO SMEAR BOTH GROUPS, AT THE SAME TIME THAT IT HELPS TO DISCREDIT THE RECENT JEWISH/CSCE GROUP LINKAGE WHICH THE AUTHORITIES MAY SEE AS A POLITICAL DANGER.

8. IT SHOULD BE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT TURCHIN HIMSELF ALMOST CERTAINLY HAS VERY LITTLE HARD INFORMATION ON WHICH TO BASE HIS HYPOTHESIS OF THE AUTHORITIES' PLANS. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, NO ONE EXCEPT HIS INTERROGATORS HAS SEEN SHCHARANSKIY SINCE HIS ARREST MARCH 16. WE HAVE REPORTED IN THE PAST THAT A TREASON CHARGE AGAINST SHCHARANSKIY WAS LIKELY, AND WE FEEL FAIRLY CONFIDENT THAT OUR SOURCES ARE THE SAME AS TURCHIN'S.
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9. IF THIS STORY -- PARTICULARLY THE ASPECTS INVOLVING ALLEGED SOVIET VIOLATIONS OF TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER AND THE RELATED REFUSAL OF EXIT VISAS FOR SOVIET JEWS WORKING IN CLASSIFIED INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED IN THOSE VIOLATIONS -- SHOULD APPEAR IN THE WESTERN PRESS WE FORESEE AS ONE OF SEVERAL LIKELY CONSEQUENCES, RENEWED CRITICISM OF OUR EXPORT LICENSING PROCEDURES FROM A NUMBER OF INTERESTED PARTIES IN THE U.S.
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